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Abstract of the paper of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

1. The mandate of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is to foster international cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture and communication and assist in narrowing the gap between developed and developing countries in those fields.

2. UNESCO promotes the free flow of ideas by word and image. The Communication, Information and Informatics Sector focuses on the application of communication and information technologies for development, democracy and peace. Its Communication Division implements projects, feasibility studies and training courses on space technology and is responsible for all aspects of international information exchange and the broadcasting of television and radio programmes via communication satellites. The International Programme for the Development of Communication, in particular, examines and supports projects on the utilization of communication satellites within and between countries. The Division of Information and Informatics deals with policies, applications and services for the exploitation of telematics for development, including the applicability and feasibility (particularly in terms of cost) of employing satellite channels.

3. The Division of Higher Education of the Education Sector provides assistance to member States on the use of space communication for education and national development in the form of expert advice. The Section of Educational Innovations, Technologies and Research carries out training programmes on educational technologies and media, including satellites for programme production and distance-learning, the latter in the framework of the "Learning without Frontiers" programme. Pilot projects using interactive television for education are also implemented by the Education Sector in cooperation with the Communication, Information and Informatics Sector.

4. The outer space activities of the Science Sector focus on the study of the natural environment and its resources. Advanced technology such as remote sensing, together with the Geographic Information System (GIS), is applied to environmental monitoring, the mitigation of natural hazards, ocean and sea monitoring, the sustainable management of non-renewable resources and the management of biosphere reserves. Pilot projects and research activities are implemented by the following: the Division of Earth Sciences, the Division of Ecological Sciences and the Division of Water Sciences; the Coastal Regions and Small Islands Unit; and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission.

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5. The Culture Sector and the World Heritage Centre carry out projects using remote sensing technology for the protection, preservation and management of important historical and cultural monuments and selected world heritage sites.

6. Within the framework of the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST), a working group on the ethics of outer space was set up to report on ethical issues related to the development of space science and technology, space and protection of the environment and the protection of individual liberty and cultural identity.